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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 001042

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KINSHASA FOR BRAZZAVILLE; EUCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [SENV](#) [CASC](#) [IV](#)
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE SITREP 15 SEPTEMBER 2006, 1430 GMT

Classified By: DCM V. VALLE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (U) A number of roadblocks were established in Abidjan on the morning of September 15. By early afternoon, some of these had been dismantled although roadblocks remained primarily in the Riviera district of Abidjan, where the Embassy is located. A group of about 50 protesters gathered in the morning in front of the RTI television station in Cocody. The roadblocks appear to have been prompted by a continuing protest over the dumping of toxic waste in Abidjan. (There were also unconfirmed reports that the roadblocks were set up to commemorate the death of a student during clashes two weeks ago between police cadets and university students.) As a precautionary measure, most Embassy personnel and private citizens were advised to stay at home. Embassy remains open with a skeleton staff.

¶2. (SBU) There have been several reports that additional toxic waste was dumped at several sites in Abidjan on the night of September 14-15. The country representative of the UN's Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) told Refugee officer that the French Force (Licorne) Commander has confirmed that new toxic waste was dumped in the Akouedo district of Abidjan last night. Akouedo is one of the sites where toxic waste was previously dumped and also the location of Abidjan's principal garbage dump. The OCHA representative said the WHO is currently checking a report of new toxic dumping in the Deux Plateaux district of Abidjan.

¶3. (U) There is also strong circumstantial evidence of additional toxic dumping as renewed chemical odors were reported at various locations in Abidjan. Several Embassy officers reported feeling dizzy and experiencing headaches and irritated breathing passages after smelling a strong odor while driving by the Golf Hotel near the chancery. Some Embassy personnel also reported an irritating odor around the chancery and chancery guards remained at their posts but went indoors as a precaution. The odor around the chancery appeared to have dissipated by early afternoon.

¶4. (C) The director of the International Community School of Abidjan, also in the Riviera district, has closed the school for the day because of the strong odor on school grounds. The director told RSO that he had heard that the trucks that allegedly dumped the additional toxic waste last night had been escorted by Ivoirian security forces. However, this report is unconfirmed and we have not heard it from any other sources.

¶5. (C) Embassy Refugee officer and CDC Chief of Party were told by a UN disaster assistance team yesterday that they were concerned that there might be trucks in Abidjan containing additional toxic waste that had not yet been disposed of. Such waste was being searched for by Ivoirian

security forces and the UN feared that those involved might try to get rid of the incriminating evidence by dumping the waste wherever they could.

¶16. (C) We have received reports from multiple sources that the opposition Minister of Transportation and his wife were attacked on the morning of September 15 while they were in a vehicle en route to a morgue to visit the remains of the Minister's deceased brother. The Minister was allegedly beaten until Defense and Security Forces (FDS) intervened on his behalf. FDS sources have told the Defense Attach, that the Minister is now at an Army base at Akouedo. The French Defense Attach, told our DATT that the Minister of Transportation was not seriously injured.

¶17. (C) Police sources have told RSO that the house of the Director of the Port of Abidjan was burned down by protesters this morning. There is no information on the whereabouts of the port director or his family, but he is rumored to have left for Europe four days ago. The director is a close collaborator of President Gbagbo and is widely believed to funnel port revenues to the President and his party. The attacks on the Minister of Transport and the port director's house have been reported in international media.

¶18. (U) In a televised speech on September 14, Prime Minister Banny announced an investigation into the toxic waste scandal and the suspension of the Director of the Port of Abidjan, the Director General of Customs, the Governor of the District of Abidjan, and the Director of Maritime Affairs at the Ministry of Transport. Banny said the toxic waste sites are being cordoned off and a French company, Tredi International, has been hired to clean up the waste. The Prime Minister assured Ivoirians the Abidjan water supply is not

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contaminated and that steps are being taken to protect food sources. Banny said eight of ten trucks containing toxic waste had been located and impounded and the government was looking for the other two. Also on September 14, the government announced that it has placed charcoal at sites where the toxic waste is located to absorb the odor.
Hooks